

ATAP

ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY
ACCESS PARTNERSHIP



Rhode Island Parent

Guide To

Assistive Technology



Developed in collaboration with the
Rhode Island Parent Information Network

- ♦ What is Assistive Technology?
- ♦ Assistive Technology Product Groups
- ♦ How Can Assistive Technology Help Your Child and You?
- ♦ 6 Basic Steps in Selecting and Obtaining Assistive Technology
- ♦ The Assistive Technology Team
- ♦ How Can I Insure That Assistive Technology is Considered in my Child's IEP?
- ♦ Does My Child Have Legal Rights to Assistive Technology?
- ♦ Who May Be Responsible for Paying for Assistive Technology?
- ♦ Assistive Technology Resources

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Introduction

This guide provides information about assistive technology and Rhode Island assistive technology resources. It is intended to provide general information about what assistive technology is, how to select it, how to acquire it, and how to use it to make your child's life better at home or at school.

The Parent Guide to Assistive Technology was developed by the Assistive Technology Access Partnership (ATAP) in collaboration with the RI Parent Information Network (RIPIN). It is funded through federal award #H224A30012 from the National Institute for Disability Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR), U.S. Department of Education. ATAP partners from the Office of Rehabilitation Services, TechACCESS of RI, East Bay Educational Collaborative, RI Disability Law Center and University Affiliated Program participated with the RIPIN, with contributions from the State Rehabilitation Council, Ocean State Center for Independent Living and PARI Independent Living Center.

Information about assistive technology can be obtained from the ATAP Central Resource Center at 1-800-916-8324 [TECH] (V/TTY); (401) 463-0202 (V/TTY); or techaccess@techaccess-ri.org (e-mail). The RI Parent Information Network can be reached at (401) 727-4144 or (800) 464-3399 or through RI Relay at (800) 745-6575 (V); (800) 745-5555 (TTY); or (800) 745-1570 (ASCII).

We welcome your feedback on this guide. Please fill out the feedback form on page 23 and return it to Linda Beaupre, ATAP Central Resource Center, 110 Jefferson Boulevard, Warwick, RI 02888.

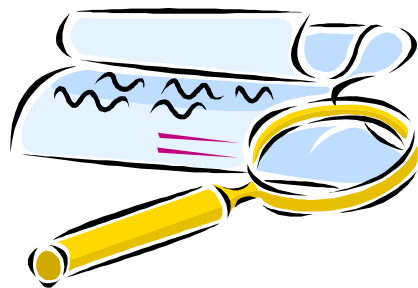
What is Assistive Technology?

Assistive Technology (AT) is any device or service that maintains or improves the functional capabilities of people with disabilities.

- **Assistive Technology Devices:** A device is anything that can be bought or made. It could be a piece of equipment or a system that helps your child with a disability do things that those without disabilities can do independently. Devices can be as simple (low tech) as a cane or as complex (high tech) as electronic environmental control systems. Assistive technology devices enable your child to participate more independently in life's activities -- hearing, seeing, moving, communicating, reaching, playing and caring for himself.
- **Assistive Technology Services:** These services can help your child select, acquire, adapt or learn to use their assistive technology devices. They are just as important as the device itself. Some examples of these services are:
 - Evaluation - Looking at your child's needs, tasks, activities, and the environment (family, school, community) in which the devices will be used with a knowledgeable evaluator. Deciding what kinds of devices will be most helpful.
 - Helping with acquisition - Making it easier to buy, loan or rent the device.
 - Selecting, designing, fitting, customizing, adapting, maintaining, repairing and replacing the device.
 - Training and technical assistance - Ensuring that your child, family members, teachers and others are familiar with the device, and how to use it effectively, in your child's natural environment.
 - Coordinating services - Making sure the device works well with other activities and other people in your child's life, such as school personnel, physical therapist or occupational therapist.
- **Planning for Assistive Technology Services Together with Devices:** Assistive technology services and devices should be planned for and obtained together to insure that a device is used effectively. Planning for adequate training on the effective use of the devices in your child's natural environment is of primary importance.

Range of Available Assistive Technology Solutions: With any given problem, there are many devices and methods that might make things easier. Technology can be any device or piece of equipment your child uses to get a job done. The level of technology is not as important as being sure that the technology that is identified will really do the job. “High Tech” or “Low Tech” refers to cost and complexity. Sometimes the solution will not require technology. This is called a “No Tech” solution.

- ❖ **Low Tech:** Tools and items with simple or no electronic parts such as adapted utensils, Velcro fasteners, pencil grips, magnifying glasses, and simple switches.
 - ❖ **High Tech:** Things with motors or multiple electronic parts, such as electronic systems to control the environment, customized powered wheelchairs, digitized speech synthesizers, and computer access systems.
 - ❖ **No Tech:** Choosing alternate ways of doing things, such as using a bowl instead of a plate, communicating through sign language, or using companion animals for assistance.
- **Your Child’s Assistive Technology May Change as Your Child’s Needs Change:** The degree and type of technology your child uses will depend on his abilities and what he needs to do. Assistive technology solutions come in a variety of sizes, shapes, costs and degrees of complexity. For example: if your child can't write well enough to take notes, she may be helped by using her classmate's or teacher's notes to study. As your child moves on to high school and prepares for more independent work, she may record lectures with a voice-activated tape recorder. Depending on her keyboarding skills, she may use a laptop computer to take notes.



Assistive Technology Product Groups

The wide range of assistive technology devices can be more easily understood by thinking of them as members of different product groups.

- **Adapted Games and Toys:** - Possibilities for accessible fun and relaxation include beeper balls, tactile checkerboards, and large print playing cards.
- **Aids to Daily Living (ADL):** Provide alternate access to the many activities of daily living. Examples of such low-tech devices include reachers, dressing aids, specialized knobs, clothing adaptations (like Velcro), shower chairs, support bars in the home, cooking aids (like specialized cutting boards), sound or light emergency indicators.
- **Communication Devices:** Provide your child with alternate ways to communicate. These devices can be called Alternative Communication System (ACS) or Augmentative Communication Devices (ACD). Devices can range from communication boards to electronic augmentative communication systems with computer linking capabilities. Text telephones provide access to standard telephone communication. Print enlargement devices, computer screen readers or Braille devices provide access to written communication.
- **Computers, Computer Programs, and Computer Access Devices:** Provide a different way of accessing and producing materials and information. There are computer programs that can be used to support different styles and modes of learning. There are devices such as alternate keyboards and voice-input systems that offer ways of physically accessing the computer.
- **Environmental Control Units (ECU's):** Provide alternate access to your child's total environment, whether at home, at school, or at work. Environmental control units involve electronic control of things like lights, doors, telephones, and other items your child may need in order to function more independently and safely in his environment.
- **Mobility Aids and Positioning:** Include canes, walkers, scooters, standers, specialized seating units, manual and power wheelchairs, and assistive driving devices.
- **Switches:** Provide access to computers, other electronic devices and toys. Switches can be activated by button touch, squeeze, sip-puff or eye-blink. Even the slightest eye movement can activate a switch to provide alternate access to a device.

How Can Assistive Technology Help Your Child and You?

Assistive technology devices and services help your child connect with and control her surroundings. Assistive technology can help your child to become independent and communicate with her family, friends, teachers and others in her life. It is important to give your child typical opportunities to learn. Exchanging information through writing, reading, hearing and speaking is one of the most basic human activities. Your child needs to understand others and to have others understand him.

The **assistive technology product groups** are described on page 3. Below are examples of devices which may help your child.

Assistive Technology can be helpful when your child doesn't have the strength or coordination to do some activities. Examples of devices include:

- Adapted grips for toothbrush handles
- Hand sprayers for washing hair
- "Reachers" to open cupboards
- Utensils with built up or weighted handles
- Velcro fasteners for buttons or shoe laces
- Weighted plates, plate guards, dycem mats under plates



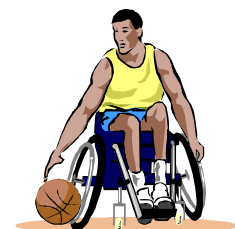
Environmental Control Units (ECU's) help your child perform every day activities. They allow your child to control his surroundings. Examples of ECU's include:

- Clap on lights
- Remote control TV/stereo
- Switch latch and timer systems
- Simple switches that can be activated by head, hand, foot or leg
- Touch controls for appliances
- Shake-A-Bed



Wheelchairs, ramps and chair lifts increase your child's mobility in the community. Other examples of devices:

- Adapted Bicycles
- Electronic vehicles
- Power and Manual Wheelchairs
- Scooters
- Swings
- Crutches
- Foam Bolsters
- Railings
- Stair Lifts
- Walkers

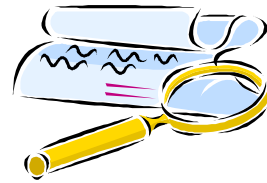


Adaptive programs and equipment help your child participate in sports and recreation. Examples include:

- Adapted sailboats
- Battery operated toys with adapted switches
- Hand-powered bicycles
- Lifts for swimming pools
- Sit skis
- Balloon-tired chairs

Your child with a visual impairment may use a wide spectrum of toys and assistive technology. Useful devices may include those with audible effects, high-color contrasts, texture and interesting surfaces. Examples of devices to develop visual attention and tracking skills include:

- Books on tape
- Braille markers and labeling tape
- Large print books
- Light boxes
- Magnifiers
- Musical high-contrast mobile
- Plastic marking tubes (for touch identification of common materials)
- Talking alarm clocks/watches
- Tape player
- Text scanners to work with computers
- Toys such as See 'n Say and Light Bright



The time is
6:00 p.m.

Your child may benefit from a wide range of assistive technology and communications strategies. Examples of devices are:

- Closed Circuit TV (CCTV)
- Doorbell and telephone flash signals
- FM systems
- Hearing aids
- Telephone amplifiers
- Text telephone relay system (TTY)
- Vibrating devices such as smoke detectors



Assistive technology can help your child in the learning process. Examples of devices include:

- Adapted toys
- Big keyboards
- Communication boards
- Mouse track balls
- Object boxes
- Specialized software
- Tape recorder
- Augmentative communication devices
- Computer/word processor
- Desk easel
- Franklin speller
- Highlight tape
- Pencil grip
- Touch windows for computers



When your young adult turns 14 (or younger if appropriate) and is planning for **transition to adult life**, including to work, post secondary training, or independent living and community participation, new assistive technology considerations may be necessary. Examples of technology to be considered include:

- Adapted driving instruction
- Communication devices
- Computer with screen enlargement software
- Job site modifications
- Lifts on public transportation
- Mobility equipment
- Modifications to a car
- Specialized keyboards

A child with physical and/or learning challenges can experience problems with communication – both writing and speaking. Examples of devices to help your child get a message across to family and friends may be:

- Communication boards
- Computer systems with adapted keyboards or voice recognition programs
- E-mail and telecommunications
- Extra-large pencil
- Picture cards
- Portable communication devices
- Speech output technology
- Tape recorders



6 Basic Steps in Selecting and Obtaining Assistive Technology (AT)

- Choices**
- Step 1: Define Your Goals**
 - Step 2: Identify Who Can Help With Your Assistive Technology**
 - Step 3: Evaluate Assistive Technology Needs**
 - Step 4: Identify Products and Try Them Out**
 - Step 5: Assure That Training is Provided For Your Child's Team**
 - Step 6: Make Sure You Have Technical Support Services for the AT Device**

STEP 1. DEFINE YOUR GOALS:

What is it that your child needs to do? How could assistive technology help your child become more independent, control his surroundings and communicate her needs?

STEP 2. IDENTIFY WHO CAN HELP WITH YOUR ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY CHOICES:

Parents don't have to make decisions alone. A team approach is usually the best route to take. Your child's specific needs determine the choice of team members. See pages 9 and 10 for descriptions of the potential team members.

STEP 3. EVALUATE ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY NEEDS:

To obtain assistive technology devices and services, there needs to be an assessment of your child's needs. The assistive technology assessment may be a formal evaluation or an identification and recognition by a team member that an AT device, support or modification will allow your child to benefit from his education. If your team does not include service providers who can adequately assess your child's needs, the team should seek outside consultants. The best assessment will include evaluating your child in her natural environments.

Some questions that give evaluators background information are:

- What does your child do well?
- What does your child have difficulty doing?
- What does your child enjoy doing?
- What would your child like to do?
- What accommodations are being used by your child?

Once completed, assistive technology evaluation results should be used in conjunction with other evaluations in the process of developing a student's Individualized Education Program (IEP).

STEP 4. IDENTIFY PRODUCTS AND TRY THEM OUT:

Once you have gathered information about what your child needs, find ways to try out devices before they are purchased. To find out about assistive technology demonstration centers in Rhode Island, call (800) 916-8324 [TECH] (V/TTY) or (401) 463-0202 (out-of-state). Your school or a Rehabilitation Counselor may help connect you with someone else who uses similar devices.

- A. If you're trying to identify and select products on your own for your child, you can contact the ATAP Information & Referral Center, vendors, or talk to parents in a similar situation. Trial uses are beneficial because they are helpful for your child.
- B. If a device is selected through the IEP process, it is always a good idea to try out products in your child's natural environment. A funding source may pay for a trial period to see if the recommended equipment or device is best suited for your child. East Bay Educational Collaborative and TechACCESS of RI's Demonstration Center are two locations used for such trial periods.

STEP 5. ASSURE THAT TRAINING IS PROVIDED FOR YOUR CHILD'S TEAM:

Appropriate training is critical for successful integration of the assistive technology device. Training needs must be addressed from the start. Training should be provided for your child, you as parents, your child's teachers, and the rest of your child's school support team. You may need to work with your team to insure that adequate training, especially training in your child's natural environment, is planned for and provided.

STEP 6. MAKE SURE YOU HAVE TECHNICAL SUPPORT SERVICES FOR THE ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY DEVICE:

Necessary technical support includes the repair, maintenance, and upkeep of assistive technology your child uses. Generally if these devices are used as part of your child's educational services, the school system is responsible for repair and maintenance and upkeep. You and your school district should have a clear agreement about who is to assume responsibility for the equipment and under what circumstances. Your agreement should include a back-up plan for times when the device or equipment is not available. Any such agreement and plan should be part of your child's IEP or 504 plan. In an IEP it may be included in the section which describes supplemental aids and services.

If you're having difficulty obtaining assistive technology, call your contact person identified on the front page of your child's IEP. If you need additional help, call The RI Disability Law Center (page 14) or RI Parent Information Network (page ii).

Your Assistive Technology TEAM

- _____ is the most important team member.
- **Family members** provide valuable information about your child's strengths and

There are many specialists who may be included on your child's evaluation team. The final members will depend upon your child's specific needs. As there is no mandatory licensing or

providers have experience or expertise in the area of assistive technology which relate to your child's needs. If no one on the educational team has knowledge and experience with assistive

technology specialist or therapist who has had training in assistive technology selection and applications to be a part of the team. The following are descriptions of potential team members:

Assistive Technology Specialists

and expertise in one or more areas of assistive technology. They may provide an analysis of your child's needs; a plan for meeting those needs; as well as training on

- _____ are used by school districts to make decisions about equipment, set up the equipment, as well as train teachers and others on the use of computer-
- _____ work for Rhode Island's two Independent Living Centers. Both of the centers, Ocean State Center for Independent Living (OSCIL)

should be directing, and is the expert in her own life. IL Counselors (or Specialists) can assist the young adult to learn about and form partnerships with the resources in

an important resource as he goes through the process of planning for transition to adult life.

Medical Personnel

demonstrate "medical necessity" for assistive technology and to receive funding through sources such as Medicaid, Medicare, and other insurance plans.

Occupational Therapist

environments, mobility and fine motor skills and related assistive technology.

- Physical Therapist (PT) works with large muscle movement and body coordination. They assist in the selection and adaptation of positioning devices and wheelchairs, as well as other items that aid in movement.
- Recreation Therapist helps by evaluating equipment for recreation and daily living. They can suggest sports or activities as well as the modification of equipment to enable your child to participate more independently in activities.
- Regular Education Teacher works with your child's Special Education Teacher to develop and implement IEP goals and objectives. The Regular Education Teacher is responsible for implementing the use of assistive technology in the regular classroom.
- Rehabilitation Technologist is someone with an engineering or technical background. They work in non-medically related areas such as home modifications, vehicle modifications, job-related adaptations and computer adaptations. They may adapt existing equipment or design new equipment.
- Special Educator is responsible for coordinating your child's IEP, which may include decision-making regarding assistive technology devices and services. The Special Educator works collaboratively with the Regular Education Teacher to develop and implement IEP goals and objectives, which involve the use of assistive technology.
- Speech Language Therapist helps in the evaluation of devices to improve communication, including alternative and augmentative communication devices.
- Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Counselors assist students through counseling, guidance, and the provision or purchase of evaluative services, training, job development and job placement services. Assistive technology needs are considered throughout each stage of vocational rehabilitation planning. In Rhode Island the services of vocational rehabilitation counselors are available through the Office of Rehabilitation Services (ORS). VR Counselors may be particularly helpful when your child is planning for transition to adult life.
- Others may be part of your child's team depending upon your child's individual needs. Examples include vendors (sellers) of equipment. Many vendors will offer free demonstration of technology to help the team with decision making. They may also help coordinate complex assistive technology. Others may also include friends and advocates who provide expertise and support.

How Can I Insure That Assistive Technology is Considered in My Child's Individualized Education Program (IEP)?

child needs assistive technology in order to benefit from his educational program.

If assistive technology is needed to support the implementation of your child's goals and

Does assistive technology help your child:

- _____ Be more independent?
- _____ Go places and interact with friends?
- _____ Increase endurance to complete tasks?
- _____ Do things?
- _____ Gain access to information?

Assistive Technology can be included in a number of ways in the IEP process:

1. As a component of annual goals or short-term objectives. Example: "Using a computer keyboard, Tina will type 12 words per minute with no errors in over 10 or more consecutive trials." Objectives leading to this goal may involve training, exploration of keyboard, and gradual introduction of letters.
2. As specific accommodations that need to be made for the student to function in the least restrictive environment. Example: a calculator may enable a student to function in a regular math class.
3. As a related service. Example: training to use a computer, a communication device or large type viewer can occur as a related service that supports the student's educational program.
4. In planning for transition to adult life.
5. As needed to participate in statewide and district assessments.
6. As part of the IEP planning process. IEP teams must consider assistive technology as part of the IEP planning process.

Some commonly asked questions regarding assistive technology used in school:

➤ **Who owns AT purchased by school systems?**

When the school district funds are used to purchase the assistive technology for your child, in order to meet the goals and objectives described in the IEP, the district owns it. When the school district uses Medicaid or other insurance, the device belongs to the student. If the Office of Rehabilitation Services purchased the assistive technology, the State of Rhode Island, owns the equipment until the rehabilitation goal is successfully completed (i.e., the person is employed). At that time the title to the assistive technology is transferred to the young adult.

➤ **Can schools require families to use private health insurance for school-related assistive technology?**

Schools may ask but cannot require you to use either public (Medicaid & Medicare) or private health insurance benefits for school-related assistive technology. If you decide not to consent to the use of your insurance coverage, your child's entitlement to services does not change. Special education services are to be provided at no cost to you.

In making your decision it is important to consider whether: your lifetime coverage limit will decrease; you will be able to obtain assistive technology for use at home; you will be able to pay for an independent evaluation; there will be an increase in your premiums; you will have any out-of-pocket expenses such as a co-pay or deductible. If you are willing to use your benefits for school-related assistive technology and services, it is reasonable to expect the school system to cover co-pays and deductibles.

➤ **Can my child's school-related assistive technology be taken home or must it be used only in school?**

Your child's IEP determines the answer to this question. If your child needs to use a device at home related to the goals in your child's IEP, then his IEP should reflect that need.

➤ **Who is responsible for maintenance, repairs, replacement and other costs?**

The school district is responsible for repair and maintenance of devices that support your child's Individualized Education Program. Check with your school district about policies on insuring equipment.

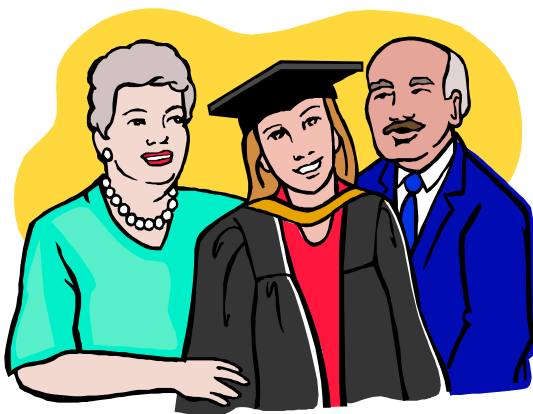
➤ **How should AT be included in transition planning?**

Planning for your young adult's transition from school to adult life is a process that must start by age 14. Transitioning may require considering different types of assistive technology in order for your young adult, to work, to participate in a training program, or to live independently.

➤ **What happens to the assistive technology when your child graduates or leaves school?**

If your child uses technology that was purchased by the school system, the school may retain it when your child leaves. Transition planning should identify what technology will be needed and how it will be obtained. The VR agency may assist your son or daughter with obtaining AT for vocational rehabilitation services and employment.

If the AT purchased by the school was customized for your child, the assistive technology ownership may be transferred to the vocational rehabilitation (VR) agency through an agreement between your school and the Office of Rehabilitation Services, while your child is receiving VR services. When your daughter completes a vocational rehabilitation program successfully (maintains employment for several months), the title for the AT will be transferred to her.



Does My Child Have Legal Rights To Assistive Technology?

There are federal and state laws that protect your child's right to receive the assistive technology she needs and to protect persons with disabilities from discrimination. The following is a brief summary of some of these laws.

➤ **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act**

The IDEA (formerly called P.L. 94-142), a federal law, as well as Rhode Island Special Education Law (Title 16-Chapter 24), a state law, require public schools to provide students who are evaluated and determined to be in need of special education, a free appropriate public education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment appropriate to his individual needs.

Under these laws it is the responsibility of the local school districts to develop appropriate Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) for each child in need of special education and related services. These services, including assistive technology, are to be spelled out in the IEP.

Schools must follow certain procedures in the development of each IEP. Each plan is to be written by a team, which includes the child's parents as equal members of the team.

When parents disagree with the proposed IEP, they may request mediation, a due process hearing, and a review by the Rhode Island Department of the Education (RIDE). They may appeal an unfavorable decision by RIDE to State or Federal court.

For more information call and ask for "A Parents Guide to the Special Education Regulations and Preparing for Your Child's IEP Meeting" from:

The Rhode Island Disability Law Center, Inc.
349 Eddy Street
Providence, RI 02903
(401) 831-3150 Voice
(401) 831-5335 TTY
(800) 274-5332 Clients
(401) 274-5568 FAX

➤ **Program for Infants and Toddlers with Disabilities (EI): Part C of the IDEA of 1997.**

The Rhode Island Department of Health administers EI programs. Services are provided through regional centers. For every child under three years of age who is eligible, Individual Family Service Plans (IFSPs) are developed. IFSPs identify the services a child needs, including assistive technology.

Additional information about both Special Education and Early Intervention is available from:

RI Department of Health
Attn: Ron Caldarone
3 Capitol Hill
Providence, RI 02908
(401) 222-2312
(401) 222-5506 (TDD)

Office of Special Education Programs
U.S. Department of Education
330 C Street, S.W. (Room 3096)
Washington, DC 20202
(202) 205-5507 Voice
(202) 205-9754 TDD

➤ **Rehabilitation Act, now part of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998**

The Rehabilitation Act prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability in programs conducted by Federal agencies, in programs receiving Federal financial assistance, in Federal employment and in the employment practices of Federal contractors. The standards used under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, for determining employment discrimination, are the same as those used under Title I of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act says that “no qualified individual with a disability in the United States shall be excluded from, denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity that either receives Federal financial assistance or is conducted by any Executive agency or the United States Postal Service.

Each Federal agency has its own 504 regulations for its programs and is responsible for enforcing those regulations. Section 504 may also be enforced through private lawsuits. It is not necessary to file a complaint with a Federal agency or to receive a “right-to-sue” letter before going to court.

Students with disabilities in publicly funded schools who are not eligible for special education may, nevertheless, be entitled to accommodations, which allow them access to facilities and programs. These accommodations may be described in a “504 plan”. Each district has a 504 officer and has developed 504 procedures which outline the policies of the district as well as your rights. If you think that your child is eligible for 504 services, contact your local district to obtain a copy of the procedures and to find out who the 504 officer is.

For information or to file complaints of discrimination by public school systems in Rhode Island, contact:

RI Department of Education
Office of Special Education
255 Westminster Street
Shepard Building
Providence, RI 02903
Telephone (401) 222-3505
(800) 745-6575 (TTY)

US Department of Education
Boston Office/Office for Civil Rights
John W. McCormack PO & Courthouse
Room 222 - Post Office Square
Boston, MA 02109
Telephone (617) 223-9662

➤ **Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Title I**

The ADA prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability in employment and in other areas including State and local government and public accommodations.

To be protected by the ADA, you must have a disability or have a relationship or association with an individual with a disability.

To be a person who is defined by the ADA as a person with a disability, you must be someone who has a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more major life activity, a person who has a history or record of such an impairment, or a person who is perceived by others as having such an impairment. The ADA does not specifically name all of the impairments that are covered.

For more information about protections under the ADA and Section 504 contact:

Disability Rights
Civil Rights Division
US Department of Justice
PO Box 66738
Washington, DC 20035-6738
You also may call for information at:
(800) 514-0301 Voice
(800) 514-4383 TDD

Governor's Commission on Disability
555 Valley Street
Building 51
Providence, RI 02908
(401) 222-3731
(401) 222-3701 (TDD)

➤ **Title 42 Chapter 87, Civil Rights of People with Disabilities**

In addition to the protections under the ADA, Rhode Island state law also prohibits discrimination by any person or entity doing business in the state. Unlike ADA Title I, this state law protects against discrimination in all work settings, not just those with 15 or more employees.

Complaints about employment discrimination under both the ADA Title I (EEOC) as well as under Rhode Island Law, are filed with the Rhode Island Commission on Human Rights.

Call: (401) 222-2661 Voice (401) 222-2664 TDD/Voice (800) 800-3302 TDD

Who May Be Responsible For Paying For Your Child's Assistive Technology?

The school district has the responsibility of providing the assistive technology your child requires for a free appropriate public education (FAPE). The following may help guide you to programs that provide public funding for assistive technology for children with disabilities.

➤ MEDICAID

Medicaid provides insurance coverage for medically necessary services and devices for children and adults who meet income eligibility and other requirements. Medicaid refers to assistive technology (medically necessary devices) as durable medical equipment and prosthetics. People who qualify for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or the Family Independence Program (FIP) are among those eligible for Medicaid coverage as categorically needy. Services to participants in FIP are provided through RITECare, a managed care program. Additionally, certain children who are severely disabled may be eligible for a Medicaid program called Katie Beckett.

Low-income individuals and families also may be eligible for Medicaid, as medically needy. To be eligible they need to demonstrate: (1) their assets are no greater than the program's resource limits and (2) though their income is above the income limit, they have spent down their additional income on medical expenses, which may include premiums for health insurance. Districts may use Medicaid funds for assistive technology devices and services for students who are Medicaid eligible. Parents must give consent for the use of Medicaid and other health benefits.

Rhode Island Department of Human Services (DHS), Medical Services Division oversees Medicaid services. DHS, through its local FIP offices, determines eligibility for applicants who are not covered by Social Security and/or the Supplemental Security Income programs.

➤ EARLY AND PERIODIC SCREENING, DIAGNOSIS & TREATMENT (EPSDT)

As the name EPSDT suggests, children covered by Medicaid must periodically receive thorough assessments (screening) of their overall physical and mental health, and their growth and development. If, as a result of this screening, any medical service is identified which would promote a child's health, prevent disability, or help a child achieve a maximum level of functioning, Medicaid is required to pay for this service for any eligible child. Any service which Medicaid can pay for under federal law must be provided under EPSDT as well.

Some assistive technology (AT) categories offered under EPSDT includes:

- Physical Therapy: Basic wheelchairs, as well as more complex wheelchairs, and alternative access add-on features including special switches, pointers and mounting devices for a computer or communication device.
- Occupational Therapy: Environmental control units, home modifications, and (for those eligible) adaptive driving equipment such as hand controls or wheelchair-carrying devices.
- Speech Pathology and Audiology Services: Augmentative and alternative communication (“AAC”) devices, including computer-based devices used to restore function in written and oral communication.
- Rehabilitation Services: Some ramps and other home modifications, van lifts, and environmental control units. Rehabilitation services are intended to help people obtain their best possible functional levels, therefore, advanced features for devices like wheelchairs, or AAC devices may also be funded.

➤ **EARLY INTERVENTION (EI):**

Early Intervention programs both coordinate and provide services for eligible children ages birth to 3 years. Each child and family who is accepted into an early intervention program is assigned a service coordinator. If the parent(s) and the multidisciplinary team, with the help of the service coordinator, identify the need for particular adaptive devices and services (assistive technology) to enhance a child’s development, the devices and services are to be included in the Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP). These services and their related devices may include Audiology, Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy, Speech and Language, and Vision Services.

Examples of assistive technology which may be addressed include: (1) individual amplification, including selecting, fitting and dispensing appropriate hearing aids and other devices, and evaluating the effectiveness of those devices; (2) adaptation of the environment, including selection, design and fabrication of assistive and orthotic devices to facilitate development and to promote acquisition of functional skills.

Early Intervention programs receive federal and state funds to pay for basic EI services including service coordination. Your child’s early intervention program will seek reimbursement from Medicaid and private insurance for AT and other services. No eligible child is to be denied service because a parent cannot pay for a device or service.

➤ **SPECIAL EDUCATION**

Children between the ages of 3 and 5 are eligible for special education services, if they are developmentally delayed, or meet any of the categories described below for 5 – 21 year olds. A student’s eligibility for special education services may end before age 21, if the student graduates from high school before then. Young people between the ages of 5 and 21, who have specific disabling conditions, which interfere with their ability to learn in school, are eligible for special education services. These disabling conditions are mental retardation, orthopedic impairments, specific learning disabilities, hearing impairments, deafness, speech or language

impairments, visual impairments including blindness, behavioral disorders, serious emotional conditions, autism and traumatic brain injury.

School systems must provide assistive technology (AT) devices or services to your child if she needs them in order to participate in or benefit from her special education services. Any item or piece of equipment which will “increase, maintain or improve the functional capabilities” of an eligible child is to be considered an AT device. For example, a school system may provide schoolwork on audiotape for a child who is blind or an augmentative communication device for a child with a communication impairment as well as simple items such as writing or eating utensils with larger handles. Also, your child must receive any devices and services, which are needed in order for him to be transported to school.

Parent counseling and training about the use of services and devices should be included in the IEP if specific services or devices are used at home as well as in school.

The school system cannot charge families for special education services. It must provide needed assistive technology devices or services (and all other special education services) at no cost. However, schools may ask permission to use both Medicaid and private insurance benefits. Schools may take advantage of these benefits as long as using them does not create a cost to the family such as a co-pay or reduction of lifetime benefits.

➤ **VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION: Office of Rehabilitation Services (ORS):**

Your son or daughter may be able to receive vocational rehabilitation services through the Office of Rehabilitation Services in the Department of Human Services if she or he has a physical or mental disability, which is a barrier to planning for or becoming employed. She needs to request (apply for) services and be found eligible for the vocational rehabilitation program. Assessment services, including assistive technology evaluations, are provided to assist your young adult to develop her employment plan with her vocational rehabilitation counselor. Vocational rehabilitation services are provided through a mutually developed Individualized Plan for Employment.

The ORS will assist your young adult to identify the services, including assistive technology, he needs to reach his goal. The services are written into the Individualized Plan for Employment. Among the services that ORS may provide as part of the planning process is a rehabilitation technology assessment which determines if there are assistive technology services and devices which may help your child at work or in training for work. Examples of assistive technology that may be included in the plan are modifications to a vehicle to get to a training program or job, adaptive equipment for a specific job, or home modifications to enable her to go to work. ORS will continue to provide services until your young adult has been working successfully for several months. ORS is available for specific services even after the Individualized Plan for Employment is completed.

Assistive Technology Resources

There are many local, regional and national sources of information on assistive technology. These include assistive technology resource centers, libraries, vendors, on-line information such as World Wide Web sites, publications, and disability organizations. Some important Rhode Island resources are included here.

➡ **Assistive Technology Access Partnership (ATAP)**



ATAP is a comprehensive assistive technology resource in Rhode Island funded through the U.S. Department of Education. ATAP's goal is to increase public awareness about the possibilities of assistive technology. The project partners work to remove barriers that prevent the timely acquisition of AT for individuals with disabilities including elders.

ATAP is the states assistive technology project funded through the U.S. Department of Education to provide information about assistive technology devices and services. ATAP's Information hot line is the easiest way to get information. **Call 1-800-916-8324 [TECH]** if you live in Rhode Island or **(401) 463-0202 (V/TTY)** if you live out of state.

ATAP PARTNERS

You may also reach ATAP through each partner agency:

- ◆ **DHS/Office of Rehabilitation Services [ATAP Lead Agency and Project Director]**
(401) 421-7005 ext. 310
(401) 421-7016 (TTY)
E-mail: solson@atap.state.ri.us
Homepage: <http://www.atap.state.ri.us>
- ◆ **East Bay Educational Collaborative [ATAP Center for Children & Youth]**
(401) 245-2045
(800) 745-5555 (TTY)
E-mail: labittl@ride.ri.net
- ◆ **TechACCESS of RI [ATAP Central Information & Referral]**
1-800-916-8324 [TECH] (V/TTY)
(401) 463-0202 (out-of-state V/TTY).
E-mail: techaccess@techaccess-ri.org
Homepage: <http://www.techaccess@techaccess-ri.org>

- ◆ **RI Disability Law Center (DLC) [ATAP Funding & Advocacy Resource Center]**
 (401) 831-3150 (V)
 (401) 831-5335 (TTY)
 (800) 733-5332

- ◆ **Ocean State Center for Independent Living (OSCIL) [ATAP's Sensory Impaired & Elderly Resource Center]**
 (401) 738-1013 (V)
 (401) 738-1015 (TTY)
 E-mail: oscil@rida.net
 Homepage: <http://www.oscil.org>

ATAP works closely with other projects and organizations to increase access to assistive technology for individuals and their families. The following list includes some of these organizations.

- **The RI Parent Information Network** provides information, training and support to parents as they work with various providers including school departments to obtain appropriate AT devices and services. Homepage: <http://www.ripin.org>

- **RI Technical Assistance Project (RITAP)** is contracted by the RI Department of Education to assist State and local agencies in designing and delivering high quality educational and related services to children with disabilities and their families.

- **TechACCESS of RI, Inc.** is devoted solely to addressing assistive technology issues through public demonstrations, individualized client assessment and training services, and customized workshops. Homepage: <http://www.techaccess@techaccess-ri.org>
The Schools Project is funded by the RI Department of Education to TechACCESS of RI to provide assistance to schools in consideration and provision of AT through IEP's.

- **The University Affiliated Program (UAP)** coordinates several programs related to individuals with disabilities. In addition to evaluating the impact of ATAP and other programs, the UAP provides information related to Transition, Inclusion, and Supported Employment.
 E-mail: edalton@grog.ri.edu

- **The 5 Regional Transition Centers** coordinate transition services among the local school districts. East Bay Collaborative Transition Center – (401) 245-2045; Northern RI Collaborative Transition Center – (401) 658-5790; Southern RI Collaborative Transition Center – (401) 782-6540; West Bay Collaborative Transition Center – (401) 822-0560; and Providence School District Transition Center – (401) 278-0520.

Important Web Sites

Local

Governor's Commission on Disability – <http://www.gcd.state.ri.us>

NetWORKri – <http://www.networkri.org>

Ocean State Center for Independent Living – <http://www.oscil.org>

Office of Rehabilitation Services – <http://www.ors.state.ri.us>

PARI Independent Living Center – <http://www.oso.com/community/groups/pari/index.html>

RI Developmental Disabilities Council – <http://www.riddc.org>

RI Parent Information Network – <http://www.ripin.org>

TechACCESS of RI – <http://www.techaccess@techaccess-ri.org>

Talking Books Plus – <http://www.lori.state.ri.us/TBP/disorgs.htm>

National

RESNA – <http://www.resna.org>

Families & Disability News – <http://www.lsi.ukans.edu/beach/beachhp.htm>

Family Village - <http://www.familyvillage.wisc.edu/>

National Center for Youth with Disabilities –
<http://www.peds.umn.edu/Centers/ihd/c3idcontents.html>

National Info Center for Children and Youths with Disabilities (NICHCY) –
<http://www.nichcy.org>

National Institute on Disabilities & Rehabilitation Resource –
<http://www.ed.gov/offices/OSERS/NIDRR/index.html>

National Parent Network on Disabilities – <http://www.npnd.org>

Parent Advocacy Coalition for Educational Rights (PACER) – <http://www.pacer.org>

Parent-to-Parent Support – <http://www.parentsplace.com>

U.S. Department of Education - <http://www.ed.gov>

FEEDBACK FORM

We'd like to know your thoughts about this Guide, and suggestions you may have for inclusion in future updates. Please use the space below to share your comments with us. We especially appreciate comments about how you have or will use this information to help your child(ren) and/or yourself. Thank you so much.

If you would like to receive updates of the RI Parent Guide to Assistive Technology, please complete the following information. Thank you.

Name _____ Title (if appropriate) _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Telephone _____ (Voice) _____ (TTY) _____ (email)

I am a: ☐ Parent of a child with a disability ☐ Individual with a disability

☐ Disability-related service provider ☐ Teacher/educator

☐ Other (describe) _____

Agency Affiliation (if appropriate) _____

Return this form to: Assistive Technology Access Partnership
 c/o TechACCESS of RI Inc.
 Attn: Linda Beaupre, I & R Specialist
 110 Jefferson Boulevard
 Warwick, RI 02888